

Christian Union.

There are two kinds of unions (so called) and by many very good thinking people, both kind are thought to be Christian. The first I think of is that of persons having different views religiously, or more directly members and ministers of different denominations, having different views on some of the principles, and doctrine of Christ, when uniting together to hold meetings or Sabbath Schools they agree together and with each other not to preach upon, or to teach the doctrine or principles upon which they differ. That kind of a pretended union is not even inter-communion; but is in my mind as great a sin as that of lying. It is virtually withholding the truth and that is equivalent to telling a lie. This kind is not Christian union.

The term *union* signifies, the act of uniting or joining two things into one; or the state of being united or joined. The term is sometimes used when persons only mean *connection*, but there is quite a difference in the meaning of the two terms. When two or more bodies religious or corporate, go together for religious services, or mutual benefit, they simply *connect* themselves together for the time being. There is not a particle of the true sense of *union* in it at all. *Union*, Christian union signifies agreement and conjunction of mind, spirit, will and affections. Hence it is said in holy writ that we should possess the mind of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, and unless we possess the spirit of Christ we are none of his. Our affections must be set upon things above. Now then the mind, spirit, will and affections of God's children being the same, "Christian union" exists among them they are "one body in Christ," having the "one faith" once delivered to the saints, and walking by faith and not by sight. They are always very careful to teach, and preach and practice all the ordinances and principles that are taught by Jesus Christ who is the author and finisher of this faith, "one faith" or system of faith.

I want to illustrate what I mean by Christian union. There is a system of uniting chemicals, by taking two or more different chemicals, each possessing a distinct body and throwing them together by the action of heat they undergo what is termed a chemical process. All the different ingredients unite into one body, each having lost its original identity, all partake of one body and one nature. Thus a new body is formed. So in "Christian union" every member having been united to Christ has lost his individual identity (as a sinner or moralist) and Christ being formed in him the hope of glory. All thus united to Christ, having by one spirit been baptized into the "one body" according to the great commission by being baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: (This commission excludes all other modes, and forms outside of trine dipping.) United to Christ there is a new body and a new nature, a new creature in Christ Jesus, and raised up to walk in newness of life, having our lives hid with Christ in God.

Brethren and sisters as such we stand together, and ever ready to speak the same things, and walk by the same Gospel rule. We preach, teach, and practice only trine dipping as Gospel baptism and admit no one upon any other mode or form to church membership. Christian union consists in all the churches, practicing all the ordinances of our creed, the Gospel of Christ. Any and all churches who do not preach, teach and practice as we do cannot be in union with us, and we cannot be in union with them. If we want to be connected together in meetings of worship or Sabbath School that is our privilege. But let us never compromise our most holy faith. Brethren let us be fully established, rooted and grounded in the Gospel hope, ever remembering that in *Christian union*, there is strength. May God ever keep us united upon the doctrine and principles of our adopted creed.

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Church Government No. 4.

BY JOHN CULP.

No, the scriptures do not sustain that unchristian

form of church government that is upheld by the method of excommunication. There are yet two more misinterpreted strongholds to attack and demolish that are claimed to sustain this practice.

"And I say also unto thee that thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the key of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Matt. 16: 18, 19.

All the ignorant, as well as the learned, know what church authority and trials have been instituted and executed, having for their foundation this passage of scripture. Now I do not want to censure too hard any of our modern Dunkard church fathers, nor any of our early, conscientious Roman brethren, but it must be said that in each case they have introduced into the church by their zeal a precedent that was unscriptural and eventually brought forth a form of church government that at present makes many families feel sad and makes humanity shudder in the perusal of history upon this subject. And we might say no less are the effects terrible now from this method of church government, only that the effects be in the spiritual sense and the temporal stay in this life after sentence somewhat prolonged, while indeed the horribleness, to an individual in this way being doomed to eternal damnation is in no wise altered. In this frightful assumption of church power lies the secret of unity and peace amidst corruption.

The first criticism that we offer against the assumed authority as it is based upon the passage under consideration, is that Peter is not called *the* rock, but *a* rock. The confession that Christ was the Son of the living God was the rock and that confession being made by Peter made him a rock.—Emphatic Diaglotte.

That all the apostles were stones and Christ a chief corner stone is sustained in Eph. 2: 20; Rev. 21: 14. Therefore all the apostles received the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and if they all received the keys of the kingdom of heaven upon the confession of Jesus Christ being the Son of the living God, it follows that every other individual receives them upon that confession. Of course the confession must be genuine. There are many bogus confessions in our day and always have been, which are not genuine. They confess Christ the Son of the living God, but do not confess him in the flesh—1 John 4: 2, 3.

All our brethren I hope, confess Christ in the flesh; that is, believe that we must obey and follow him by externally regarding him in all of his ordinances and commandments, and not as the popular opinion is, believing in them a spiritual or figurative sense only.

Again how absurd is the idea that the Lord gave the keys of the kingdom to Peter and that the church was built upon Peter. In this case it verily would follow, as some have it, that when Peter passed away the keys fell to his successor in the church whom we, nor anybody else, to any certainty know. Then would it not also follow that the rest of the apostles and churches had to look to Peter and his church for the keys of the kingdom or else go without any?

Then again look at the partiality of making it appear that the Lord transacted such an important work through Peter alone when he had other faithful and loving followers.

Once more. It is evident that it was not a fact that the presentation to Peter of the keys of the kingdom here represented authority in the church to make laws and decisions and exercise the power to expel those whom we think are apostatizing, for if this was a fact, why did not Peter himself admonish the brethren to execute this form of church government? We learn he had sufficient occasion for it when we read 2 Peter, 2nd chapter, where such were to be among them that would "despise government," and be spots and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with them. When it is evident from the latter part of that chapter that such had fallen from grace, why did not Peter say to the brethren that they through him had the keys of the kingdom, and also that the Lord declared that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church, and that they must keep the church pure and this they

can do since they have the power to bind and to loose on earth. But is it not singular that we do not find one word to this effect from Peter, nor do we find anything of the kind from any of the apostles, although they had sufficient occasion for such transactions?

Therefore it is manifest and proven by Peter himself that a violence is done in the common interpretation of the scripture under consideration and from the intelligence and experience in the past learn to improve and seek a better form of Christian government. And then we might also learn that in the goodness of God he will make himself manifest unto us in one of the most perplexing questions of the Christian age.

"But if he neglect to hear the church let him be unto thee as an heathen man and publican." Matt. 18: 17.

This is the strongest hold that the advocates of church power have to disgrace, bemean, belittle and dispossess a man of himself and of all moral obligations and rights, and make of him a mere tool. And we are going to do away with this error in very little argument.

Custom indeed has done much with us. We have been accustomed to reading this passage of scripture with its connection to the applicants at their baptism and fully instructing them how to proceed in cases of differences (not trespasses) between members. And also before cases of differences were admitted into the church, inquiry was diligently made whether the plaintiff had proceeded according to Matt. 18, and if so then the parties were ready for a church trial and a general stir and announcement preceded it. Now I declare that this scripture does not warrant any such proceedings, and we are going to prove by the language of the scripture and the common meaning thereof that the Savior's language does not refer to any such proceedings.

The cause for which the Savior recommends the private proceedings between members is that of a trespass. What is a trespass? The plain definition is the violation of a known rule of duty.

Here we learn much of the humility and leniency of the doctrine of the Savior.

It is plain that the Savior recommends this private proceeding and lenient dealing with those who have knowingly done wrong—committed a trespass. And think of it if that brother or sister turn from their error we have gained them and they stand in full fellowship without coming before the church and make an "heart" acknowledgment.

This is pretty hard on our crafty popeish order of making all believe that they must receive the forgiveness of the church. Knock this idea in the head and we deal a terrible blow to the secret of having peace and union and yet be hampered with discord and corruption.

But the first visit does not gain our brother and the second is performed; but he will not hear nor amend his known error but says to the committee, go away, I will have nothing to do with you; and they tell it to the church. The church entreates him, but still he will not hear them. What are the instructions? Let him, don't make him, but let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. That is, let him peacefully and respectfully be as any other sinner with the rest of such neighbors who do not profess Christianity, and let us not commence then with this blasphemous church power to expel him and send a committee after him and tell him that he is excluded from the church, and give him a polite but disgraceful push down the hill, all of which is mean, irritable and entirely uncalled for, for that brother was lost already before the first visit was performed; this is evident from the Savior's word: "If he will hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother."

But then some one will say, if Matt. 18th has reference only to trespasses which are so plain as this—yes, even so plain that a fool cannot err therein; then we have no rule by which to settle the many financial differences and misunderstandings that are continually among us. Answer: We have a rule and apostolic instructions to settle such differences and you will find them in 1 Cor. 6: 4, 5. There the instructions are. If those who differ can not find some wise man in the church to whom they might refer their difference they had better conclude to settle their difference themselves, or rather suffer wrong, for in consequence of the greatness of the Christian profession they are admonished, in preference to going to law, to let a committee of those who are least esteemed in the church to judge in their difference.

We have now disposed of all of those passages that are claimed to sustain, by expelling church members, a certain form of church government which we denounce as being popeish and therefore unchristian. We will conclude in the next article by proposing a more Christian-like form of church government.